

Conservative manifesto: key housing policies

The Conservative manifesto includes housing policies on:

- affordable housing supply
- building safety and quality
- regeneration
- protections for tenants
- welfare reform
- homelessness

We've summarised key information from each of these policies below. For more detail, download the original manifesto document from the Conservatives' website <https://vote.conservatives.com/our-plan>.

Affordable housing supply

The manifesto commits to renewing the Affordable Homes Programme but no specific funding pledge or affordable housing targets are included. Tenure mix is not specified, though there is a pledge to support the continued supply of social homes. There is also a promise to simplify shared ownership by setting a single standard for all housing associations. The proposed Right to Shared Ownership for housing association tenants, announced earlier this year, is not mentioned but there is a promise to evaluate more pilot areas for the Voluntary Right to Buy, following the pilot in the West Midlands. There is also a suggestion that councils could use developer contributions to fund discounted homes for sale to people with a local connection.

Building safety and quality

The Conservatives have already committed to implementing all the recommendations from the Hackitt Review and the first phase of the Grenfell Inquiry. More generally, they promise to work with the sector to ensure homes are safe, support the removal of unsafe cladding from high-rise buildings, and continue materials testing. However, no specific funding is attached to these measures. The manifesto also promises that local communities will have more control over the design of new homes and that they will be environmentally friendly with low energy bills. The accompanying costings document includes a £710m social housing decarbonisation fund.

Regeneration

There is a renewed commitment to the previously announced Towns Fund, which will invest £3.6bn in regeneration in 100 places across the UK. We are awaiting details of what kinds of interventions will be eligible for funding and whether empty and poor quality housing stock will be included. The manifesto also promises to prioritise brownfield development to promote regeneration of town and city centres.

Protections for tenants

The manifesto promises a social housing white paper, focusing on increasing supply and tenant empowerment, including measures to provide greater redress, better regulation and improved quality. For private renters, there is a renewed promise to end 'no fault' evictions and a proposal for 'lifetime' deposits, which would move with the tenant.

Welfare reform

The Conservatives will continue the roll out of Universal Credit, while promising to ensure it works better for the most vulnerable. There are pledges to support the main carer in any household receiving UC and to

make sure it always pays to work more hours. There is confirmation that the benefit freeze will end and a commitment to reduce the number of assessments that disabled people must attend.

Homelessness

The manifesto pledges to fully enforce the Homelessness Reduction Act and end rough sleeping by the end of the next Parliament. It proposes to do this by expanding programmes such as the Rough Sleeping Initiative and Housing First, and working towards greater integration of local services. These interventions will be partly funded by a stamp duty surcharge on non-UK resident buyers. There is no specific mention of support funding.

The Federation's response

- We are glad to see the Conservatives commit to renewing the Affordable Homes Programme. We will continue to work with the next government and push for significant investment in the social housing the country desperately needs. Our research puts this figure at £12.8bn every year for a decade. This is the scale of ambition we need to see. The sector is committed to improving the shared ownership product for shared owners and will work with government to do so. We have already worked with government to deliver the Voluntary Right to Buy scheme in the Midlands. Before considering further pilot schemes, any future government will need to establish whether the policy delivers good value for money and review the success of the pilot, including the extent to which replacements can be delivered on a one-for-one basis and the policy on portability. We welcome the ambition to support people into home ownership but discounted homes for sale should not supplant much needed homes for social and affordable rent as the key tenures delivered through developer contributions.
- We welcome the commitment to work with housing associations to ensure every home is safe and secure. Housing associations are doing all they can to remediate buildings with safety concerns but we need the support of the next government to lead, fund and direct remedial works towards the buildings that need them most. We are pleased to see the commitment to put £710m into a social housing decarbonisation fund. We would welcome further clarity surrounding decarbonisation targets and timescales for social housing. The process will pose challenges in terms of skills and supply chains and carefully designed transition arrangements will be essential to meet these challenges.
- The Towns Fund and its focus on regeneration is welcome. However, the evidence clearly demonstrates that regeneration takes time. This is why we have called for any programme to operate over an initial ten-year period, with an additional investment of £1bn on an annual basis, to be targeted towards those parts of the country facing the greatest social and economic challenges and including capacity to invest in regenerating empty and poor quality housing.
- We are glad to see the promise of a social housing white paper. We are in favour of strengthening the relationships between residents and landlords, with greater resident oversight and board accountability. Our Together with Tenants plan provides a framework for members to strengthen these relationships whilst being responsive to local circumstances.
- The confirmation that the benefit freeze will end is very welcome. We would urge the next government to restore benefits to their pre-freeze levels in real terms and to increase the Local Housing Allowance in line with local rents so that people can afford their housing costs. It is also vital that we see an end to the five-week wait for the first Universal Credit payment, which is pushing low-income households into poverty and debt. A properly funded welfare and support system is also vital in order to meet the Conservatives' commitment to fully enforce the Homelessness Reduction Act and end rough sleeping within a parliament